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The Bioinformationista: New Roles and Responsibilities for a Bioinformationist

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Overview
The Health Sciences Libraries (HSL) collaborated with the National Center for Integrative Biomedical Informatics (NCIIB) to create an informationist position in 2007. Early responsibilities for the bioinformationist included many traditional library liaison services including expert searching and citation analysis. As the relationship has matured, new roles and responsibilities have developed outside of this traditional partnership. These new roles and responsibilities include but are not limited to copyright and intellectual property advisors, licensing contact, open access/public access consultant, documentation expert, and research partner. With the ever-increasing number of informationists supporting researchers and organizations such as the Clinical Translational Science Award recipients, it is likely that these roles and responsibilities will become more commonplace across many health sciences disciplines.

History
The growth of molecular information in the biomedicine, clinical, and public health disciplines to discover novel scientific research is well illustrated by the exponential increase in the number of databases, data sets, tools and software being used to store, retrieve and analyze proteomic, genomic, and metabolomic data. In early 2007, a collaboration between the National Center for Integrative Biomedical Informatics (NCIBI) and the Health Sciences Libraries (HSL) at the University of Michigan resulted in a four-month pilot position, the Informationist or informally the Bioinformationist. Many of the outcomes produced by this pilot position included traditional library service support such as:

- Citation Analysis
- Literature Searching
- Library Resource Consultation

The positive relationships between HSL and NCIBI through the efforts of the bioinformationist resulted in the continued funding for the bioinformationist by NCIBI. The continuation of this role has allowed the bioinformationist to grow the responsibilities of the position and explore new methods of supporting research activity for the center.

New Roles and Responsibilities
The bioinformationist has supported the center for two calendar years and in that time has been able to provide more in-depth service and take on additional responsibilities. Some of the newer roles and responsibilities include:

- Intellectual Property Advisor
- Open Access/Public Access Advisor
- NIH Public Access Policy
- Documentation Writer
- Usability Analysis
- Research Assistant
- Future Work

Future Work
The bioinformationist continues to explore new opportunities to contribute to the center's work and increase the Health Sciences Libraries involvement in the research process at the university. She has been looking to incorporate Web 2.0 technologies into her everyday activities to increase interactive possibilities with researchers locally and beyond. She created a blog called The Bioinformationista (http://jeansong.wordpress.com) to post items and provide a chat service (meebo) that may be useful for the researchers she supports and hopes to see it used actively.

With an increasing effort toward interdisciplinary research and increasing demand on stagnant budgets, research entities such as national centers and Clinical Translational Science Award recipients should look more toward collaborating with health sciences libraries to leverage resources in data and personnel. Bioinformationists can take advantage of the opportunities that are becoming available due to these unique circumstances in science and the economy and create novel partnerships with researchers and libraries.

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